

31 May 2013

Mr Stephen Palethorpe  
Committee Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600  
[rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au),

Dear Mr Palethorpe,

**Re: Submission from Sports Medicine Australia to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee**

I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the practice of sports science in Australia, on behalf of Sports Medicine Australia and welcome the opportunity for either myself or one of Sports Medicine Australia's members to present to the inquiry if required.

**About Sports Medicine Australia**

Sports Medicine Australia is Australia's peak body for sports medicine and science, and is widely acknowledged one of the world's leading multi-disciplinary sports medicine bodies. SMA's membership is diverse and its focus is on ensuring a multidisciplinary approach to the prevention, treatment and management of sports performance and sports injuries.

The healthy and safe participation of Australians in physical activity and sport is the primary concern for all involved with Sports Medicine Australia.

Sports Medicine Australia (SMA) was founded in 1963. SMA has a broad membership of sports medicine and other health professionals. Full membership of SMA membership is available to anyone with tertiary qualifications and an interest in sports medicine or related fields. Associate membership is also available to sports trainers, sporting clubs and community members. The wide variety of Sports Medicine Australia members provide their services, both professionally and often in a volunteer capacity, to the sport and recreation community ranging from elite competition and grass-roots participation.

Sports Medicine Australia's membership includes:

- orthopedic surgeons
- physicians
- doctors
- physiotherapists
- optometrists
- dentists
- podiatrists
- dietitians
- psychologists
- sports scientists

- nurses
- teachers
- exercise physiologists
- academics
- population health specialists
- chiropractors
- osteopaths

In its advocacy role Sports Medicine Australia provides expert information, advice and commentary on a diverse range of sport, activity and health issues to key stakeholders of the broader sport and recreation community. Sports Medicine Australia produces a large range of publications including books, brochures and fact sheets for community participants and health professionals.

Sports Medicine Australia ensures members are able to share the latest developments and research through the publication of *Sport Health*, the *Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport* and access to the *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, two of the world's top ten peer reviewed journals in their field.

SMA's multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach to evidence based sports medicine and science is facilitated through professional development and national and state conferences, encouraging inter-disciplinary exchange and communication. These initiatives assist in ensuring Australia remains a world-leader in research in the sports medicine and science.

At a community level Sports Medicine Australia is responsible for creating a safe playing field in which all Australians can actively and freely participate. The delivery of the Safer Sport message throughout Australia is achieved through the development and design of courses and educational resources for coaches, trainers, teachers and participants.

Sports Medicine Australia works to ensure the safety of all active Australians, and the continued professional development of persons interested in sports science, sports medicine and healthy activity.

## Values

SMA's corporate values govern its ongoing development. SMA's corporate values include the following:

- SMA will always embrace integrity, fairness and equal access for all.
- SMA will value all of its members and openly recognises the contribution each member makes to the continued success of SMA. Further, SMA will ensure it offers unbiased, multidisciplinary and timely information to its members that compliments knowledge gained by each of the specific disciplines. Membership is bound to SMA's Code of ethics.
- SMA will seek to build relationships that are respectful while valuing each and every contribution by employees and volunteers. SMA values the passion, integrity, honesty and the highest commitment from this group to drive SMA to success. SMA will strive to be an open and approachable organisation, encouraging the sharing of information and knowledge.
- SMA will build strong professional, long-term relationships with stakeholders, while delivering on its promises, being transparent and accountable, and true to SMA's vision and mission.

- SMA believes in the application of science and research to underpin and steer best practice in sports medicine and health education.

### **Sports Medicine Australia and ESSA**

Exercise and Sport Science Australia (ESSA) is one of Sports Medicine Australia's key discipline groups. SMA's other key discipline groups are:

- Australasian College of Sports Physicians
- Sports Doctors Australia
- Australian Physiotherapy Association (Sports Physiotherapy Australia)
- Sports Dietitians Australia
- APS College of Sports and Exercise Psychologists
- Australasian Academy of Podiatric Sports Medicine

As a key discipline group of Sports Medicine Australia, ESSA is actively involved in collaborative activities with Sports Medicine Australia. These have included the development of policies, position papers and guidelines associated with safe participation in sport and active recreation. ESSA and its members are major contributors to SMA's peer reviewed Journal, *The Journal of Science and Medicine in Sport*, and the Annual Conference of Science and Medicine in Sport. This provides an interdisciplinary forum and a network of medical and allied health practitioners to exchange professional issues and to enhance an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each profession in the treatment and management of athletes' health and well-being, the scope of practice of each member of the sports medicine team, and the duty of care of the athlete. ESSA and its members also frequently contribute to many of SMA's on-going continuing education programs, and act as media spokes-people on matters of public interest and mutual concern.

Since 1963 sports scientists have been an integral part of the Sports Medicine Australia membership. In 1991, the formation of the Australian Association of Exercise and Sports Science (AAESS, now named ESSA) was initiated to provide greater professional recognition of sport and exercise scientists. AAESS provided exercise and sport scientists with greater individual identity assisted in the support and protection of the interests of exercise and sports scientists. Throughout this period both ESSA (AAESS) has worked collaboratively and in parallel to advance the professions associated with sports medicine and science.

ESSA is recognised by SMA as the peak professional body for exercise and sports science in Australia and provides national leadership and advocacy on key issues, often in collaboration with SMA. ESSA supports its members and the community through fostering excellence in professional practice, education, training and research.

### **Sport Scientists in the multidisciplinary team**

Sport Science is a highly valued discipline and forms a key component of the multidisciplinary sports medicine team. Australian sport scientists are highly sought after, and respected throughout the world, for the contribution they can make to maximising athletic potential and performance on the field. In a vast range of sports, sport scientists work collaboratively with medical practitioners

(medical officers), physiotherapists, dietitians and other members of the sports medicine support team to ensure that the wellbeing and health of the athletes are at the forefront of all decisions.

Sports scientists are currently employed in numerous settings including national and state institutes of sport, regional academies of sport, professional and elite sports teams, sub-elite sporting teams, national sporting organisations, and in private consulting roles or in private practice.

### **Recent events and the image of sport scientists**

The recent Australian Crime Commission (ACC) report exposed the sport and related industries to a number of concerning performance enhancing supplement issues in professional sport and highlight the lengths that a small number of individuals, identifying themselves as sport scientists, are prepared to go to in an endeavour to enhance competitive performance in elite sport. Whilst accepted that part of the role of a sport scientist is to improve physical performance outcomes of athletes, some of this minority of individuals are pushing the legal and regulatory boundaries in relation to the use of supplements and related medical treatments provided to athletes. Sadly this has overshadowed the valuable work provided by the vast majority of sport scientists who provide ethical, legitimate and untold benefit to their athletes and clientele.

The fact that many of such individuals exhibiting unconventional, unethical and unsafe practice highlights some of the inadequacies in a number of sporting environments into which individuals are able to be employed without any accountability to a codes of practice or similar ethical codes.

### **Practicing within professional standards**

Almost all members of professional associations, including ESSA and Sports Medicine Australia operate in accord with a code of practice. Whilst such codes do not necessarily hold the same statutory backing as professional registration, they do provide clear boundaries and a level of accountability for the benefit of the industry and the athletes /clientele they serve.

What has become apparent in a number of the recent incidents involving questionable athlete performance enhancement methods by purported sport scientists, has been the lack of accountability to such a code which may have provided some reference point for employers, athletes and the practitioners involved.

At present the ESSA code of practice is the most relevant code for sport scientists currently operating within the industry. In instances such as those recently reported, such a code may have provided a higher level of accountability, or at the very least alerted other members of the industry to exhibit caution in their employment of such practitioners.

Nello Marino  
Chief Executive Officer  
Sports Medicine Australia